

Copyright
by
Paul Owen Lutz Ryan
2018

**The Thesis Committee for Paul Owen Lutz Ryan
Certifies that this is the approved version of the following Thesis:**

**The Role of Religion, the Ikhwan and Ibn Saud in the Creation of The
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

**APPROVED BY
SUPERVISING COMMITTEE:**

Jeremi Suri, Supervisor

William Inboden

**The Role of Religion, the Ikhwan and Ibn Saud in the Creation of The
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia**

by

Paul Owen Lutz Ryan

Thesis

Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate School of

The University of Texas at Austin

in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements

for the Degrees of

Master of Arts

&

Master of Global Policy Studies

The University of Texas at Austin

May 2018

Acknowledgements

I owe a deep debt of gratitude to my advisor, Jeremi Suri and my second reader, William Inboden for their guidance and patience. Both of them have taught me so much about personal character, academia, and the role of academics. I truly hope that as I can emulate them both as I continue to grow and learn. I would also like to my many reviewers, particularly those from the US government whose professionalism and efficiency were a consistent source of motivation to me. Finally, I'd like to make special mention of Captain Edward Murphy who taught me so much about life during my time in graduate school, I'm sure I have much more to learn from him. Too all of those who helped me, both mentioned and not mentioned: I appreciate the effort you all have put into reviewing my work. Thank you.

Abstract

The Role of Religion, the Ikhwan and Ibn Saud in the Creation of The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Paul Owen Lutz Ryan, MA & MGPS

The University of Texas at Austin, 2018

Supervisor: Jeremi Suri

Abstract: Over the course of a single lifetime Saudi Arabia went from being a minor kingdom in Arabia to one of the largest geopolitical actors on the globe. But how did this happen? What made it happen so quickly? What are the repercussions of such a fast rise to prominence? This thesis argues that the success of Saudi Arabia was largely due to Ibn Saud's ability to rally the Ikhwan, a group of religiously motivated warriors, as his personal army in the early days of his reign. By using these warriors, Ibn Saud also inadvertently created the largest threat that Saudi Arabia faces today: militarized Wahhabism.

This paper looks at the life of Ibn Saud, the rise of the Ikhwan, and details how the Ikhwan eventually turned against their creator. Finally this paper explores how the Ikhwan continued to exist after their failed rebellion against the Saudi Kingdom and how that defeat led to the Siege of the Great Mosque of Mecca in 1979.¹

¹ All statements of fact, opinion, or analysis expressed are those of the author and do not reflect the official positions or views of the U.S. Government. Nothing in the contents should be construed as asserting or implying U.S. Government authentication of information or endorsement of the author's views. This material has been reviewed for classification and compliance with legal obligations.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	01
Chapter 1: The Early life of Ibn Saud	05
Ibn Saud’s Flight From Riyadh	05
Ibn Saud’s Life Among the Bedouin	07
Ibn Saud’s Time in Kuwait.....	10
Wahhabism	13
Chapter 2: The Ikhwan and Ibn Saud’s Saudi Arabia.....	17
The Founding of the Ikhwan.....	17
The Conquest of Riyadh	19
The Reconquest of Saudi Arabia and William Shakspear	22
The End of the Ikhwan.....	26
The Creation of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.....	29
The Discovery of Oil	30
Chapter 3: The Siege of the Grand Mosque of Mecca.....	33
Ibn Saud’s Twilight	33
Succession in the Kingdom.....	37
Post Ibn Saud Saudi Arabia	38
Juhayman	41
The Siege of the Great Mosque	43
The Aftermath.....	46

Conclusion	50
Works Cited	53

Introduction

After the tragic events of September 11th, the Saudi government did much to distance itself from Osama Bin Laden and the terrorists who attacked the United States. They claimed “this mingling of violence with religion was an un-Saudi aberration.”² This was a familiar claim as it was repeated almost verbatim twenty years earlier when the Grand Mosque of Mecca was besieged and overtaken by a group of radical Wahhabis. Here too, the government claimed, these men and women, their violence, and their faith were the exception, not the rule.

But was it an aberration? Saudi Arabia seems to be defined by abnormalities. Over the course of a single lifetime, Saudi Arabia went from a dream in the imagination of a child to a kingdom able to shift the global economy on its whim, allied to the most powerful nation on earth. So what happened? How did this nation rise so quickly? How did it gain the interests of the United States, the Soviet Union, Great Britain, and even the Third Reich? Was Osama Bin Laden truly a deviation from Saudi culture or was he a byproduct of Saudi Arabia’s formation? One that Saudi Arabia must contend with daily to ensure its own survival?

I argue that Osama Bin Laden and radical Islam is not an “Un-Saudi aberration.” I believe Ibn Saud’s history as a Bedouin leader and his creation of the Ikwhan allowed him to unify the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. However, in doing so, Ibn Saud paradoxically created the greatest threat the Kingdom has faced to date: militarized Wahhabism.

I use the term “militarized Wahhabism” as opposed to militant Wahhabism or radicalized or any of the other more commonly used terms for a very intentional reason. I believe previous terms have not done justice to the levels of organization that these groups possess. As you will read, Juhayman and his followers trained regularly with marksmanship and discipline drills and

² Lacey, Robert. *Inside the Kingdom*: London: Arrow, 2010. 3

the groups that Saudi Arabia currently faces are organized to such an extent as to have their own regimented training camps and rank structures. By calling these organizations militarized I try to address this level of organization and recognize it for the threat that it presents.

In order to justify such a large claim, I have divided this paper into three chapters. The first chapter details the early life of Ibn Saud, and his connection with Wahhabism. Here I will show that Ibn Saud's time spent living with the Bedouin, and specifically learning their practice of *Ghazou* or raiding, informed the tactics of his desert warriors, the Ikhwan and later his leadership style as a statesman and a general. I also claim that living in such austere conditions served as a rigorous type of military conditioning for Ibn Saud that made him an ideal leader for such a religiously charged fighting force. I also demonstrate how Ibn Saud's time in other areas such as Kuwait influenced Ibn Saud's life. Specifically I show that it was from his family's friend Mubarak that Ibn Saud learned the value of western powers in his local political scene and learned how to exploit global politics in order to achieve his own ends.

Next, I will address Ibn Saud's connection to Wahhabism. First I will provide a brief history of Wahhabism: where it came from, what it meant to its founders and what it means to its practitioners today and in the time of Ibn Saud. I will show how Muhammad Ibn al-Wahhab, years after his own life, instilled a very unique and distinct set of cultural values in Ibn Saud that he used to unify Saudi Arabia against his rivals. Through building that distinctive culture, Ibn Saud cursed the future rulers of his kingdom to have to contend with an incredibly powerful and at times violent religious extremism that Saudi Arabia still battles with today.

In my second chapter I look at Ibn Saud's early conquests and the primary reason for his early successes in Arabia: the Ikhwan, Ibn Saud's paramilitary force. I argue that Ibn Saud used these religious warriors in order to spread Wahhabism and conquer territory. By using these

soldiers Ibn Saud was able to conquer what is now the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia much faster, but that cost him and his new country dearly as he had to call in British soldiers and air support in order to finally put down the Ikhwan. By martyring these religious zealots in a battle that many describe as a massacre that Ibn Saud transitioned his kingdom away from its Wahhabi roots, but without addressing the cultural core of religious extremism these Ikhwan represented.

In my third chapter I will discuss Saudi Arabia after the life of Ibn Saud. The discovery of oil, Ibn Saud's habit of doting on his children and the overall habits of generosity learned from his Bedouin past ensured that his children never wanted for any luxury. However, they had never learned the habits of moderation that come from years of living in a desert. All of these things compiled to create a much less disciplined royal family

I claim that these royal habits of often publicized luxury mixed poorly with the unity from on Wahhabism base that Ibn Saud had built in his unification of the many kingdoms of Arabia. At times this base would recognize the incongruence between their lifestyles and that of their leadership and occasionally expressed their discontent through rebellion. And while these periodic uprisings were usually swiftly and effectively dealt with by the Saudi State, they eventually resulted in the 1970s siege of the great mosque of Mecca. I argue that this siege and its combatants were directly related to the culture cultivated by Ibn Saud's Ikhwan. I also argue ending the siege did not come easily for the Saudi family and it ultimately resulted in the Saudi government sharing power with their country's religious leaders to an extent that was previously unprecedented.

Through these acts, the Saudi government assured its survival, but did so at a great cost. From that point forward, Saudi Arabia would have to deal with a religious zealotry that would cost the government millions of dollars in defense. So how does the Saudi Arabian government

move forward? How do they reverse the trend of Wahhabism? How do they fight against a movement so integral to their creation?

Chapter 1. The Early Life of Ibn Saud

I. Ibn Saud's Flight from Riyadh

After a failed rebellion in early 1890, Ibn Saud's father Abdul Rahman received news that his family's historic enemy, the Rashids, were coming with an army of men to end the Saudi dynasty. Knowing the town they inhabited was unwilling to undergo a siege, Abdul Rahman, decided to flee. In the dead of night, the Saud family, their retainers, and a train of camels fled from the Rashids. Ibn Saud, eight years old and placed in a saddle bag next to his nine year old Sister, Noura, listened to the deafening silence of their escape while his aunt whispered to him "Thou must revive the glory of the House of Ibn Saud, O Azayyiz. And even the glory of the House of Ibn Saud must not be the end of thy endeavors. Thou must strive for the glory of Islam. Thy people sorely need a leader who will guide them in the path of the Holy Prophet- and thou shalt be that leader."³

While an estimated 27 million individuals live in Saudi Arabia, none of them were more influential to the Kingdom than Ibn Saud. His history as a warrior influenced the early diplomatic choices of Saudi Arabia and his tendencies towards proliferation, fathering over 90 children, created an entire new class of elite citizenship: the Saudi family. This new class of citizen still benefits from Ibn Saud's traditions of spoiling his guests and family members with lavish gifts; a tradition of generosity that continues even after his death.⁴ So if we seek to understand how Saudi Arabia came to be, we must first look into the life of Ibn Saud. Where he learned to fight, where he learned to rule, and most importantly where he learned to lead.

³ Darlow, Michael, and Barbara Bray. *Ibn Saud: the desert warrior who created the kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2015. 57

⁴ Bay, Barbra. "The Man they Called Ibn Saud." *JSTOR* 120 (August 2012). 91-93

Ibn Saud's father Abdul Rahman played with Arabian politics and lost. A minor emir over an area known as Nejd in what is now Saudi Arabia.⁵ Abdul Rahman, and many other Arabian leaders chaffed against the rule of the Ottoman Empire and their most favored family, the Rashids. Abdul Rahman first raised his flag in rebellion against the Rashids. While initially somewhat successful, the Rashids came after the Saudi family in their capital, Riyadh. Seeing the Saudi family hidden behind Riyadh's walls the Rashids set in for a long siege, pillaging the country side and burning many of their date trees. Abdul Rahman, with knowledge of the approaching Rashidi forces ensured that the city was well stocked with supplies.⁶

Eventually, with its stockpiles nearly exhausted the Rashidi forces, unused to siege warfare, and facing the increasing heat of the desert summer decided to end the siege and return home. The Saudi family was successful, but at great cost. The town's supplies were almost entirely exhausted and rebuilding would take quite some time. Fearing a second siege, Abdul Rahman capitulated with the Ottoman Empire who allowed him to stay as a ruler of Riyadh but under the careful watch of a Rashidi governor.⁷

After a short while, Abdul Rahman's sources told him of the Rashidi governor's plan to attack him and his family during an upcoming official visit. Once the Saudi family had settled inside the governor's guest room, the Rashids would give a signal and fall upon Abdul Rahman, his wives and Ibn Saud ending the Saudi line forever. Now armed with this information, Abdul Rahman hatched a plan of his own. Sneaking weapons into the governor's house they were able to attack the governor's forces before his signal was given. The fighting was bloody and fierce but Abdul Rahman's forces were victorious.⁸

⁵ Armstrong, H. C. *Lord of Arabia: Ibn Saud*. New York: Kegan Paul International, 1998. 22-25

⁶ Darlow 50

⁷ Ibid 53-55

⁸ Armstrong 25-27

While he was too young to participate in the fighting, this was Ibn Saud's first experience with violence. He learned the value of deception in warfare and the strength of intelligence in ruling. While not immediately applicable Ibn Saud carried these lessons with him into his later life as ruler of Saudi Arabia.

After the fight and deposing of the Rashidi governor, Abdul Rahman understood that he was now in full rebellion again. Luckily, other emirates had also raised up arms against the Rashids and Abdul Rahman sought to join them. He heard the rebel's fighters were gathering and sent his own warriors to join them with himself at the front. However, the Rashids met and defeated the other rebel forces before Abdul Rahman could join them effectively ending the rebellion. As soon as he heard of the defeat and the rebellion's end, Abdul Rahman returned to Riyadh to prepare for another siege.⁹

Still reeling from their last conflict and in a region that rarely used siege warfare, the city of Riyadh knew they could not withstand another siege. They went to Abdul Rahman and asked him and his family to leave. They would, again, acquiesce to Ottoman rule but without the rebellion's leaders the city and its inhabitants would be spared. Seeing flight as their only option, Abdul Rahman gathered his family and his belongings and in the dead of night fled from the approaching Rashid and Ottoman forces.¹⁰

II. Ibn Saud's Life among the Bedouin

Ibn Saud's childhood flight from the Rashids would have immeasurable impact upon his personality. His family, unable to stay in large settlements or near traditional watering holes as those areas risked detection and certain death, relied on the hospitality of the Bedouin. The rules

⁹ Armstrong 29

¹⁰ Darlow 3

of Bedouin hospitality dictated that if a man and his family touched the corners of your tent, you were then obligated to open your home to them, protect them, and offer all you had for three days. After which, the host would inquire as to his host's plans an indirect way of telling his guest it was time to leave.

The deserts of Arabia are a harsh and unforgiving environment, and this tradition developed as a means of mutually assured protection and survival. Anyone could call upon these traditions, and all would be honored. And the Saud family lived in this fashion, traveling from Bedouin tent to Bedouin tent for years. All the while, Ibn Saud studied his hosts and learned to live among them.¹¹

During his time among the Bedouin, Ibn Saud learned about the practice of the *Ghazou* or raiding. The raiding tribe would gather their men and sneak up to an opposing Bedouin tribe or trading caravan. The raiders would then sneak as close as they could and then, after giving a predetermined signal the raiders would all jump up, shoot their guns and create such loud violent noises as to scare their victims. The raiders were careful to avoid casualties as deaths could often lead to a near never ending cycle of blood feuding. Instead, the object was to distract and scare rather than kill. The raiders would then attempt to gather what they could from their enemy's camp and run off into the desert with their stolen camels, weapons, and food.¹²

This tradition was widely practiced and highly regulated. Raiders did not kill during the *Ghazou* and they were also careful not to leave the raided camp with too little to survive. If a raider was captured, he was often treated as a guest with tea and a meal before being given enough food and water to survive his journey back to his tribe, although his weapon and his

¹¹ Armstrong 31-35

¹² Lacey 60-65

camel became property of his captors. The *Ghazou* was a rite of passage for many young Bedouin men and often, one earned his masculinity and right to marry on the completion of a successful *Ghazou*.¹³

As Ibn Saud grew, he participated in *Ghazous* of his own. He established relationships that he would call upon later in his life and learned valuable lessons about combat and military leadership that he would use throughout his conquest of the kingdom. And most importantly he learned how to lead men and learned about the three most important traits that a Bedouin leader: bravery, generosity, and luck¹⁴

Ibn Saud's time in the desert was extremely important to the construction of his character. In the desert he found a way of life that would have been utterly cut off from him had he stayed in Riyadh. He saw the strength of Bedouin women who often rode unveiled and participated in celebrations, dancing and singing (acts that would be entirely uncouth for a Najd woman in Riyadh.) And even late into his life Ibn Saud would remark on the quality of the Bedouin. All the way through until the end of his life, Ibn Saud would seek out the desert and the Bedouin when he wanted to escape the pressures of ruling. Ibn Saud would always look back at this time of his life with a fondness and reverence second only to that of his god.

He admired how these people had lived for countless years in such harsh conditions by choice. He admired how the Bedouin understood that settling in the cities meant surrendering their freedoms, something they were totally unwilling to do. And most importantly he admired the quality of their character. "Even today there is no Arab, however sophisticated, who would not proudly claim Bedu lineage. I shall always remember how often I was humbled by my

¹³ Lacey 70

¹⁴ Ibid 32

illiterate companions, who possessed in so much greater measure generosity, courage, endurance, patience, good temper and light-hearted gallantry.”¹⁵

III. Ibn Saud's Time in Kuwait

After spending a great deal of time among the Bedouin, Ibn Saud and his family eventually wore out their welcome with the desert nomads. They then started to rely on their more powerful contacts. Around 1893, the Saud family first moved to Qatar only briefly staying with an Emir there. Two months later they then moved to Bahrain again for only a brief while. While these emirates provided a brief respite, the rulers were unable to take in the Saud family for very long as they were afraid of angering the Rashids or worse, the Ottomans. However, in 1894 the Ottoman Empire eventually became somewhat concerned with the growing strength of the Rashid family. Not entirely willing to release their most loyal family but still a bit concerned at becoming too reliant on them, the Ottomans started to empower other families in order to keep the Rashids in check. Thankfully, the Sauds were one of those families. ¹⁶

The Ottomans hoped that a strengthened Saudi family would keep the Rashids busy and in order to facilitate this they left the other major royal families know that the Empire would not object if someone took in the al-Saud family. Sheikh Muhammad, then the ruler of Kuwait, saw the opportunity and offered safety to the fleeing Saudi family. ¹⁷

The port city of Kuwait was quite jarring for a young Ibn Saud. Far more populous and wild than his home city of Riyadh and starkly different from the Bedouin camps of his most recent years, Ibn Saud was totally out of his element. But even in this foreign environment he never lost

¹⁵ Darlow 75

¹⁶ Ibid 74-77

¹⁷ Bay 91

track of his purpose. He was going to retake Riyadh and reinstall himself and his family as the rulers of Nejd.¹⁸

Kuwait was a city of vices, totally unfamiliar to a young man who had spent most of his life in the Spartan conditions of the desert. The city was filled with brothels, opium dens and other such distractions and it was in Kuwait that Ibn Saud met and befriended Mubarak, the half-brother of the Sheikh of Kuwait.

Mubarak was the opposite of his austere brother on Kuwait's throne. Mubarak had fought with the Sheikh early in his life and had left Kuwait to Bombay where he had wasted all of his wealth on alcohol, prostitutes and drugs.¹⁹ He eventually returned to Kuwait, a pauper, with intentions of retaking the throne from his half-brother. While it is unclear if Mubarak sought Ibn Saud out as a part of a power grab or if he simply found a source of empathy in another deposed monarch what is clear is that something in Ibn Saud appealed to Mubarak.

He found tutors for Ibn Saud making sure he learned mathematics, geography, and English. Mubarak's tendency towards drinking, smoking, and other more earthly delights certainly displeased Ibn Saud's father. But Abdul Rahman saw that potential that Mubarak had and did not move to stop his influence. Instead, he called in a religious scholar of his own in order to make sure that Ibn Saud balanced the mathematics and English with a healthy dose of Wahhabism.²⁰

After a few years of working with Ibn Saud, Mubarak saw his opportunity to claim the throne of Kuwait. After receiving secret assurances from the English, he rose up and deposed his half-brother sending his sons and the rest of his family fleeing. Understanding that he had upset

¹⁸ Darlow 77

¹⁹ Ibid 80

²⁰ Bay 91-93

the balance of power in the region and potentially rebelled against the Ottomans, Mubarak made sure to pledge loyalty to the Ottoman sultanate and continue to flag the Empire's flag on his port. However, the Ottoman Sultan said nothing for over a year and half.²¹

Mubarak's new position of power meant that Abdul Rahman would have an even harder time counter-balancing Mubarak's influence. And Mubarak gained an even stronger hold over Ibn Saud during this time as well. He allowed Ibn Saud into his courts and taught him everything he could about state craft. From Mubarak Ibn Saud learned the importance of regional politics. He saw the speed with which Mubarak raised the Ottoman flag and asked to become the appointed governor of Kuwait. He also saw how, after the Sultan did not respond, Mubarak sent out secret envoys seeking the support of other great powers.

These Envoys proved invaluable when Mubarak heard about an Ottoman force approaching to depose him as ruler of Kuwait. Mubarak sent out desperate pleas for support to the British Empire who then sent a warship as an "observer" of any potential conflict. The presence of this warship was enough to give the fading Ottoman Empire pause. They withdrew their forces and recognized the legitimacy of Mubarak.²²

From his special position of privilege within Mubarak's court, Ibn Saud was able to see the interplay between great power and regional politics. He saw how Mubarak consistently played the great powers against one another, a lesson he would use throughout his own statecraft. And Ibn Saud saw the importance of displays of loyalty even in the face of open rebellion. Finally, Ibn Saud also noticed the flagging power of the Ottoman Empire. He saw how easily

²¹ Armstrong 43-47

²² Armstrong 46

deterred his monarch's forces were and in the Ottoman's weakness he also saw the weakness of his enemies, the Rashids.²³

IV. *Wahhabism*

Perhaps the most important aspect of Ibn Saud's upbringing was the influence Wahhabism, the branch of puritanical Islam taught to Ibn Saud by his father. Wahhabism is an extremely conservative interpretation of Islam. It was founded by Mohammad Ibn Abd al-Wahhab in the mid-1700s.²⁴ A religiously devout young man, Ibn Wahhab had spent the better part of his early life studying under various Muslim Sheikhs in an attempt to fully understand God's words. Taking a strict interpretation of the Quran and a quotation from the prophet which favored his generation and the preceding two above all other generations, Ibn Wahhab preached for a return to what he believed was the original Islam. He strongly advocated for a very literal interpretation of the Quran and the Hadith (stories recorded of the Prophet's life) and if an activity was explicitly permitted in one of those texts then it was obviously forbidden. Ibn Wahhab saw heresy everywhere he went, and much to the chagrin of his followers, he banned any activity that he felt was remotely against his teachings. What was a grave of a well-regarded ancestor to a local was a false idol being worshipped to Ibn Wahhab. Dancing was adulterous and smoking was as forbidden as drinking. "He attacked all forms of corruption, bribery, hypocrisy, and oppression. The remedy for the current, essentially social-political ills of Al-Uyaynah and the wider Najd (central Saudi Arabia) was a return to strict adherence to Islam's fundamental founding principles."²⁵

²³ Ibid 48-52

²⁴ DeLong-Bas, Natana J. *Wahhabi Islam from revival and reform to global Jihad*. Riyadh: International Islamic Publ. House, 2010.

²⁵ Darlow 31

Most importantly though, was Ibn Wahhab's intolerance of other Muslims. Because he was so rigid in his interpretation of Islamic texts he reasoned that any form of Islam that did not conform with his teachings was heretical. As with most religious movements, it became incumbent upon the followers to proselytize their "rightly-guided" version of Islam. Unfortunately though, because of Ibn Wahhab's belief that those not conforming to his faith were heretical it permitted his followers to spread his faith by any means necessary, including force.

It should be noted here how far most of Ibn Wahhab's teachings spread from actual orthodox Islam. Not only is the Wahhabi interpretation of Jihad as a personal duty incumbent upon all Muslims historically unsound, but their continued rejection of alternate forms of Islam is also totally unorthodox within Islamic theology. While it's impossible to claim that groups like the Shi'a and the Sunni have not had their historical differences, few would go so far as to call one group heretical (as the Wahhabis do to the Shi'a.)

While his message was initially well received, al-Wahhab quickly made enemies when he burned, in the name of heresy, a number of "sacred trees" that locals would hang trinkets on for good luck. He then moved on to destroy tombs of the original companions of Mohammad and any other object that he felt detracted from the worship of God and God alone. This greatly upset the locals, both the rich who profited from the tourism that such sites brought in and the poor who believed in their religious power. These groups eventually rose up against al-Wahhab and his followers and forcibly removed them sending them fleeing into the deserts of Arabia. Ostracized by their original benefactors, for these acts, al-Wahhab and his followers eventually found sanctuary in the sheikhdom of Ibn Saud's great-great-great grandfather. The Saud family quite liked al-Wahhab's austere tendencies and believed that in the truth of his preaching. In

exchange for al-Wahhab's support, the Saud's recognized him as the final authority in all religious matters²⁶

The Saudi family developed a long history of working with Wahhabi clergy. Mohammad Ibn Saud, who initially welcomed in al-Wahhab set about with his followers to spread the Whabbi faith to all of those around them. "Together by preaching and the sword they would bring the Arabs back to the true faith of Islam." And for a very long time they were successful. They conquered entire swathes of territory and united much of the Middle East. However, they did not pay tribute to the Ottomans and the Empire quickly became concerned with this new upstart force. They ordered the Egyptians to push back the Saud family and less their power. The Egyptians were brutally successful in their mission. Initially welcomed by many of the conquered peoples who were happy to be free of the yoke of Wahhabism they then destroyed many villages, farms, and civilians earning them the ire of Arabia's people. Though temporarily pushed back, the Saud family would soon find that much of the areas surrounding them were filled with people angry at the Ottoman Empire with an (albeit forced) Wahhabi background.²⁷

This early alliance laid the groundwork for Ibn Saud's own upbringing. He learned to recite the Quran before he was seven and more importantly for the purposes of this essay Wahhabism gave Ibn Saud a facet of unifying strength that allowed him to bind together various tribes of Bedouin and create his own fighting force. It also helped to religiously charge Ibn Saud's eventual reconquering of the Emirate of Najd and then expansion into the rest of Arabia. During his conquests, Ibn Saud was not simply attempting to reclaim the kingdom of his forefathers, he was bringing Arabs together and show them the correct path of Islam: Wahhabism.²⁸

²⁶ Hammond, Andrew. *The Islamic utopia: the illusion of reform in Saudi Arabia*. London: Pluto, 2012. 20-25

²⁷ Armstrong 12-16

²⁸ Hammond 48

The Bedouin were generally not a religious group of people. Their pattern of constant movement with their herds and general solitude made it difficult for any sort of orthodox religious training to emerge.²⁹ Most would generally identify as Muslim but they may smoke, drink, or do any other number of “sinful” acts that the devout would disapprove of. Paradoxically however, this same group of people is uplifted in the Arab cultures. Their lifestyle is generally regarded as more pure and are often seen as models of traditional familial values and masculinity. But the Bedouin also had a reverence for tradition that fit nicely with Wahhabism’s call to return to the time of the prophet. Ibn Wahhab’s preaching often revered the Bedouin as most of Arab culture did, and the often violent forms of proselytization fit well within the Bedouin’s lifestyle of raiding.

Using these elements alongside Wahhabism, Ibn Saud was able to convince the Bedouin tribes to come together and trade their pastoral lives for a more agrarian lifestyle.³⁰ Once he had convinced his tribes to settle, unifying together under the common flag of Islam, Ibn Saud suddenly had at his disposal a large number of warriors that no longer had to raid for survival. They were fully at his disposal and convinced of his holy mission. With their help Ibn Saud was first able to fight against the Rashids and reclaim his family’s capital of Riyadh. Eventually they formed a group named after those who traveled with the prophet himself: The Ikhwan.³¹

²⁹ Caldarola, Carlo. *Religions and societies Asia and the Middle East*. Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1982. 74-80

³⁰ Wilson 29-36

³¹ Dekmejian, Hrair. "The Rise of political Islamism in Saudi Arabia." *Jstor* 48, no. 4 (August 1994): 627-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328744> .

Chapter 2. The Ikhwan and Ibn Saud's Saudi Arabia

I. *The Founding of the Ikhwan*

“All men who joined *al-wahhabiya* were called Ikhwan, or brethren, and were promised equal treatment regardless of their tribal origins or race, something new in Arabia. This latter-day *Hijra* or migration was akin to the Prophet's move from Mecca to Medina...and signified a renunciation of tribal bonds in favor of loyalty to the larger brotherhood of Islam.”³²

Ibn Saud was not the first to try and spread Wahhabism in Najd. On the contrary, his family had, at different times in their history, spread Wahhabism to their people and then used the faith in order to motivate their subjects to expand their kingdom. While the Saud family's use of Wahhabism as a recruiting force had generally waned by the Ibn Saud's lifetime, his religious practices and preference for Spartan lifestyles made him well suited for another revival of Wahhabism in the region.

Under the leadership of Ibn Saud, a new movement for the revival of Wahhabi Islam started within the Riyadh countryside.³³ Heeding the dire warnings of hellfire for any who persist in unbelief preached by al-Wahhab, a group of Bedouin turned away from their pastoral past and settled into a sedentary lifestyle. Their community was defined by their strict observance of the Quran and subscription to the Hanbali interpretation of Islamic law. This community of believers formed the foundations of the movement known as the Ikhwan.³⁴ All aspects of Sharia or Islamic law were strictly observed. All were expected to attend the mosque five times a day for prayers. Those who were absent without a valid reason could be beaten or even executed for repeated

³² House 8

³³ Wilson 29-36

³⁴ Commins, David Dean, Malise Ruthven. *Islam in Saudi Arabia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015. 32-40

infractions. At the same time, these early Ikhwan still kept many of the traditions of the Bedouin. They still saw combat as a normal part of life, especially for men and so they looked to Ibn Saud to give an object to their need for combat.

Ibn Saud's religious background and personal inclination towards Spartan living immediately appealed to the Ikhwan. Ibn Saud saw the advantage of these zealots and militarized them. Ibn Saud claimed that he started a movement which hoped to preach the proper form of Islam to all of the world's Arabs and set himself at the head. Suddenly Ibn Saud had a powerful army that could do much more than conquer his family's old cities: he could build an empire.

Moreover, these warriors were elite by the standards of the Arabian Peninsula at the time. The Ikhwan were hardened desert travelers and able to move great distances on nothing more than a few dates and camel's milk, and when they fought, they did so with legendary ferocity. As Darlow puts it "The Ikhwan, fired by religious zeal, their courage fortified by faith, accustomed to rigid discipline and marching under the banner of the one true faith had the potential to become a formidable and unique desert fighting force. "³⁵ Convinced that those who died in battle were granted immediate entry to heaven as martyrs the Ikhwan were utterly fearless in battle and helped Ibn Saud to conquer much more than the Rashids, with them he was able to build the empire of Saudi Arabia that we know today. ³⁶

Even though the Ikhwan often outnumbered and outgunned Ibn Saud's regular armed forces, they were seen as a supplement to his military as opposed to the sole source of his military might. Comprised almost entirely of Bedouin tribes that joined and settled in the name of Islam, the Ikhwan also granted Ibn Saud a religious legitimacy that he would otherwise have

³⁵ Darlow 167

³⁶ Andreotti, Sebastiano. "The Ikhwan Movement and Its Role in Saudi Arabia's State-Building." *State Formation and Identity in the Middle East and North Africa*. doi:10.1057/9781137369604.0007. 1-5

not had. Using them, he was able to send their religious leaders to towns ahead of his army with the goal of creating Wahhabi sentiments in the population. With this foundation laid, the people with their new found religious sentiments would often decry the heresies of their old leaders and welcome Ibn Saud and his religious warriors. Eventually, though this religious zealotry would turn against Ibn Saud and force him to fight against the very soldiers he worked so hard to create.³⁷

II. *The Conquest of Riyadh*

The Saud's family's fortunes started to turn in the early 1900s. The Ottomans had decided to lift up the Saud family as a means of countering the rising power of the Rashids. This extra favor, as mentioned in the previous chapter, allowed the Sheikh of Kuwait to offer shelter to the Saudi family. Here the Saud family stayed for years, as Mubarak took an interest in young Ibn Saud and taught him the art of statecraft. He allowed Ibn Saud to stay with him as he governed his kingdom and entertained guests, and conducted diplomacy.³⁸ However, it was during this time with Mubarak that Ibn Saud learned valuable information about the Rashids. Ibn Saud found that the Rashid who had removed his family from their ancestral home had passed leaving the city in the hands of a much younger cousin.

The Saud quickly became invigorated with a new fervor to recapture Riyadh, the most enthusiastic being Ibn Saud who at seventeen years old was eager to prove himself as a capable leader and warrior. Still, though, the Saud family was relatively penniless and needed Mubarak's support. Mubarak was generally interested in aiding the Saud family as a weaker Rashidi tribe was also in the security interests of Kuwait, however he was unwilling to publically move

³⁷ Niblock, Tim. *Saudi Arabia: power, legitimacy and survival*. London: Routledge, 2006. 37, 55

³⁸ House, Karen Elliott. *On Saudi Arabia: its people, past, religion, fault lines and future*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013 33

against the Ottomans or the Rashids without external support. Doing so would have risked Mubarak's entire kingdom. So the Saud's waited, until finally the British, seeing the imperialistic expansion of the Germans in the late 1890's and sensing weakness in the Ottoman Empire made an alliance with Kuwait.³⁹

The Ottomans tried to counter this move but were ultimately unable to prevent this British/Kuwaiti agreement. With the British guaranteeing Kuwaiti security, Mubarak, with his position now more secure, felt comfortable helping the Saud family raise arms against the Rashids.⁴⁰

The fighting against the Rashids was difficult and long. For over two years, Mubarak and the Sauds attacked the Rashids and were pushed back. The hot summers of Arabia made conventional campaigns difficult and allowed some respite for the Saudi family to replenish their forces but it was clear that conventional arms were not going to be an effective means of reclaiming Riyadh. So, after two years of fighting, Ibn Saud gathered Mubarak and fifty other fighting men. He took unconventional routes gathering sympathetic tribesmen along the way.

With the same characteristic luck and bravery that had served him so well in Bedouin *Ghazous*, Ibn Saud began to reclaim his kingdom. The small group of fighters was fierce enough to cause great harm to the tribes that supported Ibn Saud's enemies, but small enough to seemingly disappear into the desert when pursued by a stronger force. Traveling by night, Ibn Saud slowly directed his forces to Riyadh. Using the Eid celebration to cover their advance Ibn Saud quickly reached the city ready to attack.⁴¹

³⁹ "Kuwait: Anglo-Ottoman Relations 1890-1914." January 1, 1994. Accessed Winter 2017. http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/14230/11/11_chapter%204.pdf. 172-175

⁴⁰ Kuwait: Anglo-Ottoman Relations 1890-1914 191-193

⁴¹ Ochsenwald, William, Sydney Nettleton Fisher, and Sydney Nettleton Fisher. *The Middle East: a history*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2011. 696-700

Instead of directly attacking or besieging the city, Ibn Saud decided to go with a more traditionally Bedouin approach to the attack. He selected his 6 best men from his force to sneak in and remove the Rashidi governor. Through his spies, Ibn Saud knew the governor would be vulnerable when he went to visit his wife's house as he did most mornings. His men were let into the city by a family with loyalist sentiments and his men were able to then subdue the governor's wife. After waiting for some time, the governor arrived relatively unguarded and unarmed. Even with his smaller entourage the governor's guards still outnumbered Ibn Saud's men. With the element of surprise however Ibn Saud was able to defeat the Rashidi governor. He then opened the gates to his remaining forces and allowed the Rashidi garrison safe passage out of the city. Ibn Saud sent out runners throughout Riyadh of what had happened. Before the end of the day Ibn Saud was leading the city in their evening prayers declaring before the entire town and God that he was in control of Riyadh.⁴²

Despite his success in Riyadh, Ibn Saud still had a long way to go in terms of proving himself to the Bedouin. By virtue of his conquest, and in particular the method of his victory in Riyadh, he had proven to possess some of the three vital traits of Bedouin leadership but ultimately his victory was an insignificant one. True, he had captured a city but it was relatively small. He would have to prove that he could hold his new territory, defend it against invaders, and govern it fairly.

Ibn Saud was aware of those expectations and after securing Riyadh he immediately set the town's people to work repairing any damage on the town's walls and preparing for a potential counter attack. He also publically declared himself a leader as he led the town in their afternoon prayers. However, all were not convinced of Ibn Saud's right to rule. Mutliba, the wife of the

⁴² Ochsenwald, 697

now dead Rashidi governor of Riyadh in the days following his death presented Ibn Saud with a pillow she had made herself. Such a gift implied submission and an acceptance of Ibn Saud's right to rule. She had secretly placed a number of spells upon the pillow though intended to kill Ibn Saud. Supposedly, Ibn Saud became extremely ill shortly after receiving the pillow and was only cured by the work of a famous spell breaker. Ibn Saud claimed that "In the process of the spell being broken, a large quantity of small black worms or caterpillars came out of [his] nose and many small white worms were discharged from his throat."⁴³

While such a story is very likely the result of a great deal of exaggeration, it is important to understand that most of the historical records of this time came from Ibn Saud himself. The truth of such a story is largely irrelevant as it demonstrates Ibn Saud's own personal belief that such evil magic existed and that he would have succumbed to it had God not intervened. This is likely indicative of a larger view on Ibn Saud's part. By sharing this story, he shows that he clearly believed in the actualized power of God and in this case, Satan. By maintaining this narrative of literal combat between good and evil likely helped Ibn Saud to find recruits to his cause both as Ikhwan and Wahhabis. Moreover, stories like this one help to create a mythology around Ibn Saud. Much of Ibn Saud's self-told history reads more as a heroic saga than an actual history. That isn't to say that Ibn Saud wasn't an exceptional man (he was) but instead it suggests that Ibn Saud was invested in creating an image of himself that was larger than life. Stories like this one create an image of Ibn Saud that helped to position him as the leader of Wahhabi Muslims even beyond the borders of his Kingdom, an image he used to spread his faith and his political power.

III. *The Reconquest of Saudi Arabia And William Shakspear*

⁴³ Darlow 107

Largely due to his governorship in Riyadh, Ibn Saud was able to establish a base of support while his enemies, the Rashids prepared for a counterattack. The Rashids prepared their forces to re-take Riyadh while Ibn Saud used his position in Riyadh to recruit even more warriors. Ibn Saud was able to use his knowledge as a Bedouin leader to recruit a great deal of fighters and when the Rashids finally came the first barrage of Ibn Saud's rifles decided the battle.⁴⁴

Ibn Saud's followers continued to pursue the Rashidi army using guerilla warfare, tactics quite familiar to the desert warriors.⁴⁵ The Ikhwan in particular excelled in this type of warfare winning many victories over the Rashids and the Ottomans, until they final won major victory in Rawdat Muhanna that killed the Rashid leader, Abdul-Aziz. This triumph, opened up massive swathes of land to Ibn Saud and a quick letter pledging allegiance to the Ottoman Empire convinced the Ottoman's that Ibn Saud was easier to tolerate than the was to remove. The Empire accepted his claim to the new territory giving Ibn Saud permanent legitimacy over the entire regions of Najd and Qassim in what is now central Saudi Arabia.⁴⁶

While Ibn Saud was an experienced desert warrior, even the most hardy of Bedouin do not campaign during the Arabian summer. Ibn Saud would take his warriors to Kuwait during the summer months of his campaigns. Due to its position as a major port, Kuwait had earned the interest of many of the major global powers at the time. Kuwait was a major port in the Arabian sea and as European powers like Britain and Germany sought to expand their global influence they sent diplomats to Kuwait city into Mubarak's palace where they met Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud knew the strength of European power in the Arab world. He used his summers to spend time

⁴⁴ Al-Saud, Saud ibn Hathlol. *The History of Kings of Al Saud*. 78-81

⁴⁵ Andreotti 3-5

⁴⁶ Armstrong 68-72

bragging about his military victories, exaggerating his own up and coming power trying to form alliances with those who wished to weaken Ottoman rule.

Ibn Saud's victories alongside his connections in Kuwait helped foreign powers to notice Ibn Saud, and take an interest in him. As part of their campaign to weaken the Ottoman Empire as World War I was starting, the British sent envoys into the desert to forge alliances for England and undermine its enemies. Through these envoys in 1910 Ibn Saud met the westerner who, more than any other, would change his life: William Henry Irvine Shakespear.⁴⁷

An army officer with a reputation for being a man of action, Shakespear did not fit the typical mold of a diplomat. While he was particularly good at gaining the trust of local rulers, his lack of awareness of his own subordinate rank, and total disregard for established traditions of higher society made Shakespear more enemies than friends. Wanting to keep his talents, but also take him out of harm's way, the British decided to send Shakespear to the Middle East, a position which suited Shakespear quite well.⁴⁸

Shakespear immediately took to learning Arab and Bedouin culture. He became fluent in Arabic and felt most at home among the Bedouin. It was a happy coincidence that he seemed almost hand made to befriend Ibn Saud. First arriving in Mubarak's kingdom in Kuwait, Shakespear heard stories of Ibn Saud and sought him out. When he finally met Ibn Saud the pair became extremely close friends.⁴⁹ They would sit and speak, often for days about politics, their differing countries and their places in the world, and most often how to outwit the Ottoman Empire.

⁴⁷ Carruthers, Douglas. "Captain Shakespear's Last Journey." *The Geographical Journal* 59, no. 5 (1922): 321-34. doi:10.2307/1780609.

⁴⁸ Armstrong 117-125

⁴⁹ Bay 95

As their friendship grew they discussed Ibn Saud's plans for his kingdom. It was clear that Ibn Saud sought British protection against the Ottomans and the Rashids. Shakespear counseled Ibn Saud about his enemies, particularly the Ottomans and the Rashids and learned about the growing Wahhabi movement that Ibn Saud claimed allegiance to. While religiously rigid, Shakespear was pleased to see that such rigidity did not translate to a lack of interest in the world or in the West. Quite the contrary, he found Ibn Saud to be an extremely worldly man of great political wit and tact.⁵⁰

Though Ibn Saud may have been unaware of it, Shakespear had quickly become Saud's greatest advocate in the British government. "His praise of Ibn Saud's character and attributes as an Arab leader was even more glowing than he had given in his report of their first meeting a year earlier. He repeated and endorsed Ibn Saud's version of events..."⁵¹ Shakespear urged his superiors to consider Ibn Saud's proposal for British protection and even requested that he serve as a permanent liaison between the two countries. While Shakespear's close personal relationship with Ibn Saud undoubtedly played a role in this recommendation, Shakespear was utterly loyal to the British Empire. Shakespear rightly believed that Ibn Saud had a very large role to play in the Arabian Peninsula and with the help of British protection, would become a stalwart friend of the Empire. The British, decided they could guarantee Ibn Saud's loyalty with a stipend rather than a guarantee of protection, especially as such a guarantee would greatly upset relations with the Ottoman Empire.⁵²

Ten times Ibn Saud appealed to the British for protection, and ten times he was rejected. Understanding that he could not rely on foreign support, he turned to his own people and

⁵⁰ Bay 94-97

⁵¹ Darlow 162

⁵² Carruthers 330-334

resources. And most importantly, he turned to their unifying faith. He began to rely on the Ikhwan more intensely and used the chaos that came with the First World War in order to expand his own powers against the dwindling Ottoman Empire's. Each new city that fell to his desert warriors was forced to embrace Wahhabism. For many citizens it was an easy choice, but these early victories also ingrained another Saudi tradition that would have massive long term ramifications: Shi'a repression.⁵³ Sometimes directly targeted by the Ikhwan, other times simply the victims of systematic persecution the Shi'a faced constant struggles under the expanding Kingdom of Ibn Saud.⁵⁴

IV. *The End of the Ikhwan*

As Ibn Saud's kingdom grew so too did his international prominence. Kingdoms like Great Britain which had once all but ignored Ibn Saud's requests for alliances and protections were forced to acknowledge that the Saudi family was here to stay. This led to internal conflicts within the kingdom itself. The British Empire, by definition was an apostate in the eyes of the Ikhwan and their religious leader simply speaking to them was a serious offense.⁵⁵

Not only that, but the Ikhwan felt constrained by Ibn Saud's treaties. Against the wishes of the Ikhwan, Ibn Saud recognized the borders of colonial possessions like Transjordan. These lands were inhabited by Muslims that, in the Ikhwan's eyes, needed to be taught the ways of the proper path of Islam. Bored by the stalled pace of Ibn Saud's expansions, and fueled by a religious desire to spread the word of Islam, the Ikhwan began raiding into Transjordan.⁵⁶ They raided colonial possessions, they raided border posts and they even raided other Saudi citizens.

⁵³Rasheed, Madawi, and 'Abd Al-Ilāh. Nu'aymī. *Tārīkh al-'arabīyah al-sa'ū dīy*. London: Dar Al Saqi, 2002. 141-143, 265-266

⁵⁴ Ibid 265

⁵⁵ Hammond 66-74

⁵⁶ Andreotti 20

And even worse, these raids were nothing like the tradition *Ghazou*. The Ikhwan had left those traditions long ago and now they found with the express purpose of killing. They quickly gained a reputation for killing their male prisoners and even occasionally killing women and children as well.⁵⁷

Eventually Ibn Saud lost control over the Ikhwan almost entirely. While they still conquered in his name and aimed to spread Islam, he could no longer direct or restrain them. This became apparent in Taif a city near Mecca that the Ikhwan captured. While the Ikhwan claim that they were fired on by a police station first, their reaction was undisputedly bloody. The Ikhwan went door to door massacring the inhabitants of the conquered city killing thousands.⁵⁸ It was clear at this point that Ibn Saud was no longer in control of this heavily armed, heavily motivated fighting force that now rampaged across his lands and threatened to undo all he had worked to achieve. The Ikhwan had to be dealt with quickly and violently.

Ibn Saud at first turned to the British to help him reign in the Ikhwan. Also feeling the effects of the Ikhwan's raiding parties the British thought to use their air force to stop the Ikhwan. However, despite a few successes from the British, the Ikhwan knew the deserts of Arabia far better than any of the British pilots and the lack of proper tracking technology made it almost impossible for the British warplanes to provide any protection to those traveling in the desert.⁵⁹ The ineffective response of the British and Ibn Saud to the Ikhwan led to rumors that Ibn Saud had grown fat and lethargic in Riyadh. The Ikhwan rose up in rebellion to establish a new, stronger leader: Duwish.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Commings, David (2009). *The Mission and Saudi Arabia*. I.B.Tauris. p. 85.

⁵⁸ Safran, Nadav. *Saudi Arabia: the Ceaseless Quest for Security*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991. 87-89

⁵⁹ Lacey, The Kingdom 110-123

⁶⁰ Andreotti 23

Ibn Saud met the rebel forces with all of the technology that his new allies the British had supplied him. Vehicles mounted with machine guns and air support made quick work of the Ikhwan forces at the battle of Sabilla. Though accounts on the battle vary from a pitched battle to an absolute massacre of the Ikhwan, Ibn Saud clearly emerged the victor.⁶¹

After the battle, Duwish sent emissaries offering his surrender to Ibn Saud. Ibn Saud had clearly had enough of the violence against his own people, but also felt that there had to be some sort of punitive action. He decided that the Ikhwan would surrender their weapons and horses as well as any loot they had taken from Ibn Saud's territory and that Duwish himself must come before Ibn Saud and surrender.

Despite what was assuredly his going to be his execution, Duwish accepted and was brought before Ibn Saud on a stretcher as he was injured during the battle. Ibn Saud, saw the injured man and said "You are no match for me, I am too powerful for you. I pardon you. You may go wherever you wish and I will give you whatever you need. But your future actions and behavior, good or bad, will be judged by me..."⁶² He then had Duwish's wounds dressed and sent him home. Later Ibn Saud told his people "he did not like killing even one Muslim but that obedience to God was necessary and that [The Ikhwan] had become fanatics who had acted against the instructions of Sharia."⁶³ By using this characteristic mix of punitive action and rehabilitation Ibn Saud was able to then incorporate the much more easily controlled elements of the Ikhwan into the Saudi National Guard.⁶⁴

Despite this victory over the Ikhwan, Ibn Saud was either unable or unwilling to fully eliminate the religious zeal that the Ikhwan embodied. Ibn Saud likely found such fervor to be

⁶¹ Lacey, *The Kingdom* 205

⁶² Darlow 349

⁶³ Ibid

⁶⁴ Rasheed 87, 115

favorable. He likely found it to be especially favorable because, despite this most recent uprising, Ibn Saud was a true Wahhabi and it made sense to have his population follow his own religious inclinations. Unfortunately for the nation's stability however, the royal family, due to a massive influx of new wealth generally failed to pick up on the same Spartan habits of their patriarch.

V. *The Creation Of the Kingdom Of Saudi Arabia*

With the Ikhwan defeated, Ibn Saud turned to his own kingdom. He now had total control over his family's historical kingdom of Nejd as well as that of his enemies in Hejaz. On September 23, in 1932, seizing on his gain in political capital from his victory over the Ikhwan, Ibn Saud unified the Kingdoms of Hejaz and Najd into one not so humbly declaring them the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.⁶⁵

The strong foreign powers at his borders meant that conquest was unlikely to continue to be a major focus for the kingdom so Ibn Saud turned to his skills at statecraft. His kingdom, while wide was generally barren. Yes, he controlled many cities but he also controlled vast swathes of territory with nothing but desert and very few natural resources.

To make matters worse, Ibn Saud had learned leadership from the Bedouin. Leaders in Bedouin tribes are not only chosen for their wisdom or combat prowess, but also for their wealth. Among the Bedouin, a leader was expected to provide for their people in times of scarcity but no Bedouin had ever had to take care of an entire city before, much less a kingdom. To his merit, Ibn Saud maintained his Bedouin traditions as a king. He would regularly give lavish gifts to any who would visit him and hosted a daily meal where any of his subjects could come to his palace

⁶⁵ Rasheed 1-4

and receive food. To be sure, the cost added up and eventually gifts and other similar expenses made up a major portion of the Saudi economic budget.⁶⁶

Thankfully, Ibn Saud had one major source of income: The Hajj. The Hajj, a Muslim pilgrimage to the holy city of Mecca occurs once a year in the Islamic Calendar. All Muslims who are physically and financially able are expected to make the trip at least once in their lifetime regardless of their home country and going more than once is considered to be especially praiseworthy. Ibn Saud's kingdom was able to use this large, regular influx of visitors as a major revenue generator through taxes and other tariffs.⁶⁷

This system of taxation worked for some time, but eventually Ibn Saud's open handedness with his children and grandchildren alongside the prolific nature of his relationship with his wives meant that the expenses of the kingdom grew exponentially. Furthermore, in the early 1930s the entire world was struck by the great depression and Muslims the world over suddenly stopped coming on the Hajj. Saudi's foreign allies like the British were still reeling from World War One and the depression themselves and significantly dropped their foreign payments. The Saudi family needed a second source of income, fast.

VI. The Discovery of Oil

Fortunately for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia however, Ibn Saud had made the acquaintance of a man by the name of Charles Crane. Crane was an American philanthropist who had helped Yemen explore its mineral resources. In 1931 Crane approached Ibn Saud about doing the same for his country, especially the vast swathes of territory he had conquered after his victories over the Rashids and the Ikhwan. Ibn Saud desperate for a new source of income and

⁶⁶ Bay 95-95

⁶⁷ Tripp, Harvey, and Margaret Tripp. *Culture shock!* Portland, Or.: Graphic Arts Center Pub. Co., 2000. 194-196

water resources as his population grew, agreed. Crane sent Karl Twitchell a geologist to conduct water and mineral survey. Twitchell knew that a part of Ibn Saud's kingdom called Hasa had a similar geological limestone shelf to Iran and Bahrain. In both of those countries, drilling into the shelf uncovered vast oil deposits.⁶⁸ Moreover, the Hasa region in particular was filled with old Ottoman reports of oil seepages, though no one remembered exactly where. Despite Twitchell's best efforts none could be found. Ibn Saud needed a bail out and oil seemed like a likely path. But without a guarantee of oil inside his country, no company was willing to give Ibn Saud the vast amounts of money he requested for drilling rights. That is, until they finally struck oil.⁶⁹

After years of trying, Ibn Saud had almost entirely given up on the hope of finding oil in Saudi Arabia. Occasionally major oil companies would send their geologists with the hope of finally finding Saudi Arabia's hidden oil wealth. While Ibn Saud generally entertained them and allowed them to search he always made sure to include that they also do something for the Kingdom, specifically drill water wells for Saudi's people.

Finally, in April of 1937 two geologists from the United States, Max Seineke and Floyd Meeker found a cut into the limestone shelf that they had all assumed held oil. Realizing how deep the limestone went, but still believing there was oil inside the geologists were convinced that the previous expeditions before him were simply not drilling deep enough. They convinced their drilling crews to drill to an unprecedentedly deep level over 4,700 feet below the surface. Right before giving up the well struck one of the largest sources of oil in the world. Suddenly Ibn Saud could fix his monetary difficulties. He held a bid over drilling rights, and while the British

⁶⁸ Anderson, Irvine. "Frontmatter." *Aramco, the United States, and Saudi Arabia*. doi:10.1515/9781400853144.fm 9

⁶⁹ Ibid 24-26

companies generally kept their offers around the same, pre-oil discovery rates, the Americans matched Ibn Saud's offer. He found a buyer, and an ally in the United States.⁷⁰

Generally put off by the British lack of cultural understanding and attention to Saudi Arabia, Ibn Saud welcomed the Americans into his country. This arrangement proved to be particularly valuable to the Americans too as they entered World War Two with a new source of oil. The United States, seeing the value of access to such a resource was often willing to renegotiate the original agreement to allow more favorable terms for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.⁷¹ It was this re-negotiation that made Saudi Arabia into the incredibly wealthy country that we know of it today. But while this wealth did not turn Ibn Saud from his habits of austere Wahhabi living, his many children did not benefit from the same Bedouin upbringing. Their habits of excess and indulgence ran completely counter to the country's Wahhabi traditions and this dissonance led to the resurgence of one of the greatest internal threats Saudi Arabia faces today religious extremism.

⁷⁰ Anderson 15, 55

⁷¹ Cooper 88-110

Chapter 3. The Siege of The Grand Mosque of Mecca

I. *Ibn Saud's Twilight*

Ibn Saud's shrewd negotiations had solved the Kingdom's financial problems for the foreseeable future and with little doubt had helped the allies and more specifically the United States win the Second World War. In less than sixty years Ibn Saud started in exile and built a political power house and allied to the victors of the Great War and an integral friend to what became the most powerful nation on Earth, the United States.

But the task of governing was quite different now. Ibn Saud's style of governance thrived in the margins, he relied on greater powers underestimating his tiny kingdom and being able to turn neutrality into alliance once a clear winner was chosen. Even during World War II, Ibn Saud had entertained guests from the Third Reich.⁷²

Moreover Ibn Saud's country was changing, and quickly. Saudi Arabia a country built on daily struggle, austerity, and tribal ties had quickly become one of the wealthiest nations on Earth. Clearly changes were on the horizon and not just material changes, Saudi society on the whole would undergo massive changes with this new wealth. And the next generation would have to reconcile their culture built on scarcity while surrounded in plenty.

Ibn Saud was getting older. He had entered into his sixties and his life of war and desert life had taken its toll on his body. He still kept up the traditions of an Arab leader, frequently entertaining guests and oil workers with lavish feasters but as one of his guests noted "He

⁷² Achcar, Gilbert, and G. M. Goshgarian. *The Arabs and the Holocaust: the Arab-Israeli war of narratives*. London: Saqi Books, 2011. 124-127

seemed tired, as if life was becoming a burden to him. ‘He seemed to have lost his sparkle...the glory of manhood of the Sultan was passing’⁷³

Saudi Arabia’s new global position meant Ibn Saud was also expected to play a larger part in global Arab politics. His relationship with Egypt waxed and waned but generally improved under king Farouk. And, in fact, Ibn Saud was quite popular in Egypt. During royal visits, the people of Egypt greeted Ibn Saud with cheers and smiles while young parents held their children up to get a good view of a truly Muslim Monarch.

King Farouk had lost much of his country’s support due to what his people saw as subservience to the West and in the late 1920’s a group of Muslims began to organize seeking out reform in Egypt based on the Quran and Shariah. These reformers wanted to model Egypt after Saudi Arabia and they called themselves The Muslim Brotherhood.⁷⁴

At the same time, the horrors of the Holocaust had created a new international fervor for Zionism. Leaders the world over saw the persecution that Jewish peoples faced, and their own populations, fresh from liberating the persecuted from concentration camps in Germany and Poland pushed their leaders for actions. There was a great cry for a Jewish homeland and Palestine was to be that homeland.

The issues surrounding Palestine, its choice as the homeland for the Jewish people, and the circumstances through which immigration and relocation occurred go well beyond the scope of this thesis. To explore the issue in sufficient depth would require its own thesis and while I am sure such a report is worthy of being written (and I am equally sure multiples of such papers already exist) that is not my intent for this piece.

⁷³ Darlow 450

⁷⁴ Lacey Inside the Kingdom 55-57

Suffice it to say that the creation of Israel brought about feelings of Pan Arabism and anti-Westernism throughout much of the Middle East. Ibn Saud's new position as a major international leader and king of presumably the wealthiest Arab nation at the time meant that there were great expectations on him from both his own people and others to push about against the West and help build Arab autonomy. Such hard stances generally went against Ibn Saud's style of playing both sides of the fence when it came to international politics and he was, much to the disappointment of many Arabs across the world, generally careful to not offend his American or British allies when it came to the Palestine issue.

Piling onto these problems was Ibn Saud's spending habits. Despite the massive amounts of income coming into the country, Ibn Saud and more specifically the demands of his massive family had left the kingdom spending more than it took in. Aware of these issues, he had financial advisors brought in from foreign nations all of whom advised the same thing, Ibn Saud would have to separate his family's wealth from the state's income. Ibn Saud outright refused. He could not fathom a world wherein he did not have total control over what he felt was his money.⁷⁵

Even still he had refused to implement many social programs that would have helped bridge the gap between the two groups of extremely wealthy and extremely impoverished people in his newly rich country. Ibn Saud was quick to point out that his young nation lacked the infrastructure that would have allowed those welfare programs to succeed. He could easily build hospitals and universities all over his country, but without people to run them they would simply be empty buildings testifying to a failed state program.

⁷⁵ Darlow 480-485

Eventually, Ibn Saud's health finally got the better of him and he began giving up some of his power to his heirs. Ibn Saud's massive family and large number of wives caused a bit of an issue when it came to determining succession. He had over 37 sons and an unknown number of daughters and by the 1950's the royal princes had separated into multiple groups each bandying for power with Ibn Saud's inevitable demise on the horizon.

Seeing the different factions emerge and fearing a civil war after his death, Ibn Saud began abdicating power to his official heir, Prince Saud. However, Ibn Saud's abdication of power had coincided with the first major oil strike in the Kingdom.⁷⁶

Previously, Saudi Arabia had kept its own workers in oilfields separate from their western colleagues. The Arab workers had massive disparities in pay and in living conditions, especially when compared with the sometimes literal white picket fence style homes that their American colleagues lived in. Even still, these workers had not seen an increase in their wages despite the massive amounts of wealth they were generating and the ever rising prices of a developing nation. Eventually workers inside a major Aramco camp decided enough was enough and refused to work.⁷⁷

The strike lasted for months, through fairly harsh treatment from the camp's security forces. The Americans on the camp wrote letters to their colleagues back in the states claiming that Arabs were simply easily riled and commented on how the site inconvenienced their access to the Aramco camp's stables. While some may point to the west as the source of these striker's inspiration, it probably more likely came from their home countries of Egypt, and Syria where socialist and pan-Arab movements were picking up greater and greater steam.

⁷⁶ Darlow 483

⁷⁷ Ibid 484-485

This would be the last great crisis that Ibn Saud would face. Shortly after the strike ended Ibn Saud died in his sleep on November 9th 1953. A true Wahhabi Muslim, his funeral was suitably austere. “[In Riyadh], in accordance with strict Wahhabi custom, he was buried in an unmarked grave and his clothes were sold in the market place... His last words were ‘There is no power and no strength save in God.’”⁷⁸

II. *Succession in the Kingdom*

To many, Ibn Saud’s greatest success was his ability to united Hejaz and Nejd and build the country that we know as modern Saudi Arabia all within a single lifetime. As the world has seen time and again with many great rulers from Alexander to Genghis Khan, the greater challenge comes after their death. Foreign countries had speculated on an eventual civil war between Ibn Saud’s heirs for years.⁷⁹ Moreover, the circumstances of Ibn Saud’s death almost begged for conflict.

At the time of his death, Ibn Saud’s official heir, Prince Saud, was away on business and his second eldest son, Prince Faisal, was with Ibn Saud, at his death. Thankfully, Ibn Saud foresaw the potential rivalry between his sons and met with them before his death. He made Faisal swear loyalty to Prince Saud and ensured that Prince Saud named Prince Faisal his heir after his death. These pledges miraculously held up after Ibn Saud’s passing and ensured the Kingdom did not fall into civil war, but Saudi Arabia was far from out of the woods.

Ibn Saud had failed to address many of the growing problems in his kingdom. The disparity between the rich and poor grew at an exponential rate, food insecurity was rampant throughout the country and healthcare was generally inadequate. Prince Saud removed many of Ibn Saud’s

⁷⁸ McLoughlin, Leslie J. *Ibn Saud: founder of a kingdom*. Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St Antony's College, Oxford, 1995. 189

⁷⁹ Burdett, Anita L. P. *Saudi Arabia: secret intelligence records 1926-1939*. Slough: Archive Ed., 2003.

administrators who, while effective at administering a smaller kingdom, were entirely unprepared to manage the issues Saudi Arabia currently faced. He also pledged to address poverty, and healthcare, all while increasing Saudi Arabia's military strength and preserving the religious principles of its founding.⁸⁰

III. Post Ibn Saud Saudi Arabia

But Prince Saud at the start of his reign lacked the popular support that allowed Ibn Saud to keep many of these issues in check and the problems from Ibn Saud's leadership started to grow. The Bedouin tribes that Ibn Saud connected with on such a personal level began to look at the lavish palaces of Riyadh and other cities with disdain. The people of Saudi Arabia became even more aware of the growing poverty gap as the royal family's estates grew and new buildings popped up forcing relocations of the shanty towns that had developed throughout Riyadh.⁸¹

Compounding to this, the growing size of the royal family meant that inevitably some would break from the Wahhabi traditions of their upbringing. And each new report of drunkenness, extravagance, or even dealings with the West were likely to be broadcast on the radios that had just recently become a household good.

On top of this, Pan-Arabism, Marxism, socialism had reached a peak of strength in Egypt and Syria. These movements spoke to many Saudi Arabians on a personal level, Marxism in particular reached many of the more impoverished groups like those working in the oil fields. Suddenly new opposition groups started to build against the Saudi Royal family. A group of school children demanded the end of controlled curriculum and the dissolution of the Saudi

⁸⁰ "Kingsaud." [Http://www.kingsaud.org/](http://www.kingsaud.org/). Accessed Winter 2017. <http://www.kingsaud.org/history/subarticle/new-ministries/1118>.

⁸¹ Mubarak, Faisal A. "CULTURAL ADAPTATION TO HOUSING NEEDS: A CASE STUDY, RIYADH, SAUDI Arabia." Accessed Winter 2017. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9ec8/5be58bbe4f86c018f11473e837c2b9edacdd.pdf>

morality police. The leaders of this group were captured and publically whipped for “being infected with communism.”⁸² The kingdom also tried to fight against the ideals of secularism by offering cash prizes for children who memorized the Quran.

Over time, other groups also formed although with generally disparate ideas. Some of these groups professed ideals of pan-Arabism, anti-Westernism while still others sought out liberal reforms within their governments. These different groups wanted everything from the removal of the west from Saudi Arabia, specifically its oil companies while others asked for a free press, help for the impoverished and better education especially for women. Fortunately for Prince Saud, none of these groups were able to unify on such a large scale to unite those Saudi Arabians who felt disenfranchised. For the most part, they stayed generally disparate with differing demands on the royal family keeping them from ever representing an actual threat to the royal family.⁸³

While none of these movements ever fully achieved their goals, there were some marginal successes. A protest in Dhahran confronted King Saud and handed him a list of their demands which included higher wages, shorter hours and some measures of job protections. The King initially refused their demands and asked that the leaders of the movement be arrested. This led to an even greater protest which, while it was eventually put down, it also led King Saud to implement some reforms. After Dhahran, he started to look into better education programs and updated hospitals and even opened up some schools for women.⁸⁴

Eventually, power passed from King Saud to Prince Faisal who immediately set to work trying to remove Saudi Arabia from its deep hole of debt and public scrutiny. King Faisal was

⁸² Darlow 490

⁸³ Ibid

⁸⁴ [Http://www.kingsaud.org](http://www.kingsaud.org)

generally successful in his efforts. When he started his reign, Saudi Arabia was hemorrhaging money to corruption and the Saudi Riyal was incredibly unstable. Over the course of six years, Faisal was able to cut spending by two thirds and helped to stabilize the Riyal. He worked diligently to resist corruption and to build Saudi Arabia's internal economy.

While his reforms seem to have been successful, they carried a great a political cost. Many of his reforms, particularly those focusing on education chaffed against the Wahhabi base of Saudi Arabia. And many traditional tribesmen and religious leaders condemned the reforms. In order to help build Saudi Arabia, King Faisal also took to importing workers from foreign countries. Saudi Arabia was somewhat unique in their importation of foreign workers, though. Not only did King Faisal bring in educated workers that Saudi infrastructure could not provide yet, but they also brought in many of laborers for unskilled and semi-skilled jobs that many Saudi Arabians could not or simply refused to do.

As with all rapid changes tensions emerged, compounded by the fact that Saudi Arabia had remained guarded from outside influence for the vast majority of its history. Many in the Kingdom, particularly its religious elites pushed back against King Faisal's call to modernize. They felt that King Faisal was intentionally moving away from the religious foundations of Saudi Arabia and they started to express those opinions violently.

In 1965, after King Faisal had authorized the use of the television in Saudi Arabia he was greeted with violent riots instigated by conservative priests who felt that the television violated Islam's moratorium on grave images. These riots were violently put down, but they would rise up time and again. While each time, the protestors had a generally different issue they were addressing the overall theme was clear. Somehow, Saudi Arabia's great wealth and its move

towards modernization had turned the country away from its Islamic roots and these protestors were willing to do whatever it took to correct their country's course, even if it meant violence.

IV. Juhayman

It is within this backdrop of religious extremism in the midst of indulgent excess that Juhayman, horrified Muslims everywhere as he led an army of his followers to take over the Grand Mosque of Mecca one of the holiest places in Islam. Juhayman was born the son of one of the Ikhwan survivors of Sibillah. Defeated by Ibn Saud's western machines and cast aside for the same religious fanaticism that had brought them into the King's good graces the Ikhwan were left to fester with their resentment.⁸⁵

Juhayman, meaning ugly face, was named in a typically Bedouin fashion. He was given a harsh name to prepare him for his harsh life. From an early age Juhayman was immersed in the culture of the Ikhwan. He heard their stories of fighting both for Ibn Saud and later against them. He heard his people recount how they believed the Saudi family had fallen from their austere roots in Wahhabism and he found a home in the Saudi National guard. The National Guard had been Saudi Arabia's rebranding of the Ikhwan, still religiously focused but now totally loyal to the royal family. Inside the National Guard he was generally protected from any legal action against his political leanings, but eventually he found himself on the run from the law and cut off from his means of support.⁸⁶

Ostracized from others and almost entirely on his own, Juhayman became increasingly radicalized. He started by writing "The Letters of Juhayman," a series of twelve letters that

⁸⁵ Mcloughlin 108-116

⁸⁶ "History of the Saudi National Guard." Al-Sharaq Al-Awsat. September 11, 2006. Accessed Fall 2017. <https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/theaawsat/features/history-of-the-saudi-national-guard>.

would serve as an explanation and inspiration for Islamic extremists years after him. Juhayman claimed that “The Al-Saud....had exploited religion as ‘a means to guarantee their worldly interests, putting an end to jihad, paying allegiance to the Christians [America], and bringing evil and corruption upon Muslims.”⁸⁷ It was in essence, the extremist’s position against the Saudi Royal family. It was the reason why the Ikwhan fought at the battle of Sabillah and is one of the fundamental underpinnings of Osama Bin Laden’s letters to the world after his attacks on 9/11. ⁸⁸

He modeled many of his own actions after those of the prophet: he would articulate his inner monologue attempting to emulate the prophet. He even went on to show how the Saudi family were not blood relatives to Muhammad (a claim the Saudi family has never actually made.) All of his actions seemed to have two primary goals to them. First, Juhayman was attempting to establish his own legitimacy not only as a font of religious knowledge but as a source of religious sanctity and second, he was questioning the Saudi family’s right to rule. Both of these claims were, from a religious and political perspective, quite serious.

His move from religious zeal to zealot occurred one night in the desert during the late 1970s. He had been contemplating the Mahdi and its position in Islam, when he received a dream. In that dream Juhayman claimed that the Mahdi’s identity was revealed to him as one of his followers: Mohammed Abdullah Al-Qahtani. Juhayman identified Al-Qahtani as the Mahdi to his followers who then started to report similar dreams of their own. Al-Qahtani’s own sister even dreamed she saw her brother standing at the great mosque in a great victory. Convinced that

⁸⁷ Lacey 18

⁸⁸ "Full text: bin Ladens letter to America." The Guardian. November 24, 2002. Accessed March 04, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>.

he was on the right path Juhayman began to prepare. He was going to take over the Great Mosque of Mecca and then let God himself cleanse the kingdom for his righteous followers.

Juhayman began to prepare with supplies and weapons while he sent his followers out into the desert intent on practicing their marksmanship. Juhayman had found the Mahdi, the Islamic year A.H. 1400 was on the horizon and even better they knew of a system of cellars and basements beneath the Grand Mosque which would serve as the perfect defensible spot. Oddly enough, while the followers were clearly critical of the Saudi family they did not actually have a plan for its downfall. It seems as though they believed that by taking the mosque, God would be so inspired by the actions of his followers that he would then send his angels or some other force to bring about the new world that Juhayman and his followers so deeply desired.⁸⁹

In Juhayman's mind it was clear: he had a plan, he had the forces, the training, and the supplies and most importantly he had the Mahdi himself. He just needed to put the Mahdi in the right place at the right time and then let God do the rest.

V. *The Siege of the Great Mosque*

To say the Kaaba is a religiously important place would be a massive understatement. Its role within Islam goes beyond words. According to Islam, the Kaaba houses one of the first shrines made to God by Adam and it the literal centerpiece to a yearly pilgrimage that all Muslims must undergo at least once in their lifetime. That said, the Kaaba and the mosque surrounding it are still very much open during the rest of the year, and as a citizen of Mecca you are able to bring your deceased relatives to the Kaaba as part of their funeral. Disguising their weapons on the

⁸⁹ Hegghammer, Thomas, and Stéphane Lacroix. *The Meccan rebellion: the story of Juhayman al-'Utaybi revisited*. Bristol, England: Amal Press, 2011.

stretchers that carry the bodies of the dead into the mosque Juhayman and his followers were able to sneak in huge numbers of rifles, ammunition and supplies into the mosque.⁹⁰

At the sound of the first call to prayer, the rebels broke out their weapons and took out their microphone proclaiming the new Mahdi. They killed police officers guarding the mosque and then barred the doors. Quite suddenly Gods house had been taken over and now the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia would have to deal with it.⁹¹

Needless to say, news of the mosques siege sent waves throughout the royal family. King Khaled, Faisal's successor, is said to have wished the rebels had taken his house instead of God's. He then tasked his defense minister, and interior minister with the reclaiming of the mosque. Doing so was not an easy task. Early on the siege, there was precious little information about who the men who had taken over the mosque were. Were they rebels? Were they terrorists? Were they an attack by a foreign government? No one was sure.

Thankfully, the religious Ulema of Saudi Arabia were able to provide some answers. One of the Ulema's own had been leading prayers when he was interrupted by Juhayman. He recognized his young pupil from long ago and snuck into his office to tell his peers all about him. The Ulema were also able to help in another incredibly important matter: taking the mosque back over. All good Muslims knew of the moratorium on violence inside the Mosque, so how could the Saudi Kingdom retake the mosque? How should his soldiers proceed? The Ulema, somewhat embarrassed that Juhayman had come from their stock quickly gave the king permission to do

⁹⁰ Lacey Inside the Kingdom 20-24

⁹¹ Ibid 24-28

violence in order to protect the lives of the Muslims still in the Mosque and then stood by to advise the King on how to destroy the man who not too long ago they had called a missionary.⁹²

The Saudi forces wanted to waste no time in retaking the mosque. As soon as they had their permission they sent their forces in but Juhayman's forces were waiting and ready. They opened fire and cut down the first Saudi attack. Next a battalion of paratroopers arrived. The princes insisted they too go in immediately. The commander asked for more time, perhaps darkness so they could use flood lights to help blind the defenders. His superiors reprimanded him swiftly and sent him in. What did death matter when it meant martyrdom? The commander followed his superior's orders and met his end alongside his soldiers at the mosque. This victory played even more into Juhayman's hands. He had claimed that an army would come from the north and be devoured by angels and suddenly his angels had destroyed an army of paratroopers from the north of Saudi Arabia.⁹³

Finally the Ulema spoke with more than just a simple granting of permission. They came out publically issued a verdict citing the Quran saying "Do not fight them within the sacred Mosque until they fight you in it. But if they do fight you, then slay them; such is the recompense of the unbelievers."⁹⁴ But they also knew, from their own personal experience that these men were not unbelievers. So how could they use this piece of the Quran to justify violence against them? They simply said that even though these parts of the Quran were meant to specifically speak about non-Muslims, it can also include those who act like them. Despite all of the death,

⁹² Hegghammer 80-86

⁹³ Lacey Inside the Kingdom 27

⁹⁴ Khalifa, Rashad. *Quran: the final testament: authorized English version, with the Arabic text*. Capistrano Beach, CA: Islamic Productions, 2005. 2:191

violence, and claims of the Mahdi the Ulema were unwilling to call the rebels anything but Muslim.

While not the strongest in its language, the Ulema's ruling gave the government what it wanted: permission to use whatever means necessary to clear the enemy out of the mosque. They started at night this time. They first sent a vehicle around the mosque asking for surrender and when there was no response they opened fire upon the mosque with considerable force. They utilized weapons that had come as part of their deals with the United States and put their soldiers into the mosque. The fighting was fierce but eventually the superior arms of the Saudi military prevailed, Juhayman and his followers had been pushed into a corner of the mosque's basements and teargas eventually brought them out. The prisoners were executed across the Kingdom, there would be no doubt that the Al-Saud family still ruled here.⁹⁵

VI. *The Aftermath*

While it took an embarrassingly long time to quell this uprising the Saudi government with the help of European equipment eventually defeated and executed Juhayman and his followers. But they did so at a great cost to their own political strength. The Mosque was a holy site of Islam, known specifically for its powers to bring peace among warring tribes. To shed blood inside the mosque would be a massive offense. The royal family needed religious authorities to allow them to use weapons to clear the mosque. And while they were given that permission, the mere act of asking demonstrated the massive power that religious scholars or Ulema of Saudi Arabia could wield.

⁹⁵ Lacey 36

These rebels had clear and direct ties to the Ikhwan generations before them. They too saw themselves as rightly guided and rebelling against the inherently lazy ways of the Saudi family. Their legacy and the legacy of religious extremist from which Saudi Arabia suffers so greatly today is the perpetual price the Saudi family must pay for their kingdom. Their country was created from Wahhabi principals and at various points in its history those some principals have nearly destroyed it.

Even though the Saudi family was able to quell Juhayman's rebellion, his act against the Saudi Arabian family demonstrated that the Saudi princes were governing over a kingdom that required religious legitimacy in order to function. This created a symbiotic relationship between the kingdom's rulers and the religious sheikhs. The sheikhs would keep the princes in power and the princes would make sure the sheikhs enjoyed positions of prestige found nowhere else in the Arab world.

By incorporating religious legitimacy guaranteed through the sheikhs the Saudi family was able to insure its own regimes survival and continuation for generations, however it also brought in a new factor for risk consideration. The generals of Saudi Arabia not only have to ask themselves who wants our land or our resources but they also must ask who can disrupt our religious power.

The leaders of Saudi Arabia seem to have come to two answers to this question: Those religious extremist sects within their own country, and the Shi'a. Saudi Arabia's history of exploiting religious zealots has also led to Saudi Arabia being forced to put down many of those same zealots after their use has expired. The Ikhwan and Juhayman are only two examples of a

long list of religious zealots produced in Saudi Arabia.⁹⁶ Zealots like these could use the religious cultural identity of Saudi Arabians to fight against the Saudi royal family. As such Saudi Arabia has an extensive internal police force linked with its military in order to combat such a threat. This internal police force recognizes (though not publically) the inevitability of religious extremism developing in Saudi Arabia, but ensures that the efforts of those groups are directed outside of the Kingdom itself.

The Shi'a, generally through Iran, are also a major threat that the Saudi Arabian military must protect against. While Shi'a populations within Saudi Arabia are generally low, they are heavily repressed.⁹⁷ Countries like Iran or Yemeni rebel forces see this repression as an affront to Shiism and, so Saudi Arabia believes, seek to disrupt and destabilize the Kingdom. Sometimes through official political means in disputes between Iran and Saudi Arabia and other times kinetically such as rebel groups attacking Riyadh's airport.⁹⁸

In order to combat these threats, Saudi Arabia has a developed and modernized military force. This military is divided into two categories: conventional military forces and guard units. The conventional military units are further divided into an army, an air force, a navy, and a strategic missile command.⁹⁹ The guard forces on the other hand are all infantry or mechanized infantry divided into the Royal Guard and the National Guard. All of Saudi Arabia's military units are controlled by the Saudi royal family so there is a degree of civilian control, however, as demonstrated by Ibn Saud, the royal family define themselves by their military heritage. Moreover, the armed forces are controlled through the ministry of defense whereas the National

⁹⁶ Lacey 1-12

⁹⁷ Niblock 83-86

⁹⁸ Missile from Yemen Intercepted near Riyadh Airport." *Manila Bulletin*, November 5, 2017. Accessed November 8, 2017. http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-513278754.html?refid=easy_hf.

⁹⁹ Cordesman, Anthony H., and Nawaf E. Obaid. *National security in Saudi Arabia threats, responses, and challenges*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005. 109-122

Guard are controlled through the Ministry of the Guard each ministry is run by a different crowned prince who, breaking with the traditional roles of nepotism in Saudi Arabia, is selected for his competence as opposed to seniority.¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Gray, Matthew, and Matthew Gray. *Global Security Watch-Saudi Arabia*. Westport: ABC-CLIO, 2014. 39-45

Conclusion

Saudi Arabia is a country fighting against the forces of its own creation. It was built by relying upon a shared experience of austerity and religious conservatism that then shed much of that identity as political and social change was forced upon it by the discovery of oil and the massive amounts of wealth that came from it.

Ibn Saud needed the Ikhwan in order to unify his kingdom. Their religious zeal allowed him to win battles that would have been otherwise unwinnable and also granted his forces levels of freedom of movement that were unmatched in the early 1900s. However, in order to do so he needed to find a way to not only create the Ikhwan, but also to bolster their numbers and build popular support for himself in neighboring territory. Religion became the perfect solution to all of these problems. Through religion, and particularly Wahhabism, Ibn Saud was able to settle a great number of the Ikhwan and direct their penchant for raiding and violence towards his own enemies. He was also able to use religion in order to build localized resentment against rulers that were not himself.

For the most part, Ibn Saud's upbringing and lifestyle allowed him to build an image of himself as the ideal Wahhabi, one that represented Muslim interests and had familial legitimized right to rule. However that same idealization of simplistic lifestyles and the global need to deal with foreign powers eventually lead to those same forces that once hailed him as a leader to begin to reject Ibn Saud and his policies. The globalizing world forced Ibn Saud to deal and make alliances with infidel countries and it forced Ibn Saud to constraint their mission of spreading the true form of Islam through violence to all Muslims.

And with the discovery of oil, the massive influx of wealth helped to save the country from its financial troubles but Ibn Saud's view of himself as a simple desert warrior slowly

worked against him as he began to mismanage greater and greater sums of money. This wealth worked in direct conflict with the culture of austerity that Ibn Saud had cultivated among his people and eventually lead to resentment between those who had wealth and those who did not. Ibn Saud's own lack of understanding of statecraft on such a large scale also helped to widen the rift in wealth and prevented any sort of meaningful development programs from starting.

While Ibn Saud was ultimately able to see to a successful and peaceful transition of power, there were already rumblings of conflict within the Kingdom. Protest movements, inspired by pan-Arabism, Marxism and socialism had started to spring up in Saudi Arabia and each had to be dealt with by the royal family. And while these movements were successful the ultimate issues of socio-economic disparity, poor healthcare, and poverty were generally left undealt with.

This dissatisfaction found a home in religion where the wealth of the royal family was then transformed into indulgence and allowed religious fanatics to create an enemy of the Al-Saud family branding them as heretical and simple charlatans who use religion as a means of control as opposed to a way of life.

This resentment finally reached its peak in the siege of the Great Mosque of Mecca where religious extremists took over the mosque in hopes that God's wrath would then come down and cleanse the earth of the Al-Saud family. While no such wrath fell upon the Al-Saud family, the price of cleaning up the mess was quite costly. The Saudi family realized that the price of their country's creation was a permanent relationship with the Ulema where the Royal family's political capital would be legitimized through religious authority. By binding their power to the Ulema, the Al-Saud family was able to secure its rule for the foreseeable future but because of the country's foundation and because of the significant place that Wahhabism holds in the

country, it is quite likely that The Kingdom will have to contend with religious extremism for years to come.

Works Cited

- Achcar, Gilbert, and G. M. Goshgarian. *The Arabs and the Holocaust: the Arab-Israeli war of narratives*. London: Saqi Books, 2011.
- Al-Rasheed, Madawi. *Muted modernists: the struggle over divine politics in Saudi Arabia*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2016
- Al-Saud, Saud ibn Hathlol. *The History of Kings of Al Saud*.
- Anderson, Irvine. "Frontmatter." *Aramco, the United States, and Saudi Arabia*. doi:10.1515/9781400853144.fm 9
- Bronson, Rachel. *Thicker than oil: Americas uneasy partnership with Saudia Arabia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2008.
- Burdett, Anita L. P. *Saudi Arabia: secret intelligence records 1926-1939*. Slough: Archive Ed., 2003.
- Caldarola, Carlo. *Religions and societies Asia and the Middle East*. Berlin: Mouton Publishers, 1982.
- Carruthers, Douglas. "Captain Shakespears Last Journey." *The Geographical Journal* 59, no. 5 (1922): 321-34. doi:10.2307/1780609.
- Cooper, Andrew Scott. *The oil kings: how the U.S., Iran, and Saudi Arabia changed the balance of power in the Middle East*. London: One world, 2013.
- Commins, David (2009). *The Mission and Saudi Arabia*. I.B.Tauris.
- Commins, David Dean, Malise Ruthven. *Islam in Saudi Arabia*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2015
- Cordesman, Anthony H., and Nawaf E. Obaid. *National security in Saudi Arabia threats, responses, and challenges*. Westport, CT: Praeger Security International, 2005.
- Cordesman, Anthony H. *Saudi Arabia enters the twenty-first century*. Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003.
- Darlow, Michael, and Barbara Bray. *Ibn Saud: the desert warrior who created the kingdom of Saudi Arabia*. New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2015.
- DeLong-Bas, Natana J. *Wahhabi Islam from revival and reform to global Jihad*. Riyadh: International Islamic Publ. House, 2010.
- Dekmejian, Hrair. "The Rise of political Islamism in Saudi Arabia." *Jstor* 48, no. 4 (August 1994): 627-28. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4328744>

Devji, Faisal. *Landscapes of the Jihad: militancy, morality, modernity*. London: Hurst & Company, 2017.

"Full text: bin Ladens letter to America." *The Guardian*. November 24, 2002. Accessed March 04, 2018. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2002/nov/24/theobserver>.

Gray, Matthew, and Matthew Gray. *Global Security Watch-Saudi Arabia*. Westport: ABC-CLIO, 2014

Gold, Dore. *Hatred's Kingdom: How Saudi Arabia Supports the Global War on Terror*. Washington, DC: Regenery Publishing Inc, 2003.

Hammond, Andrew. *The Islamic utopia: the illusion of reform in Saudi Arabia*. London: Pluto, 2012.

Hegghammer, Thomas, and Stéphane Lacroix. *The Meccan rebellion: the story of Juhayman al- 'Utaybi revisited*. Bristol, England: Amal Press, 2011.

"History of the Saudi National Guard." *Al-Sharaq Al-Awsat*. September 11, 2006. Accessed Fall 2017. <https://eng-archive.aawsat.com/theaawsat/features/history-of-the-saudi-national-guard>.

House, Karen Elliott. *On Saudi Arabia: its people, past, religion, fault lines and future*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013

Khalifa, Rashad. *Quran: the final testament: authorized English version, with the Arabic text*. Capistrano Beach, CA: Islamic Productions, 2005

"Kingsaud." <http://www.kingsaud.org/>. Accessed Winter 2017. <http://www.kingsaud.org/history/subarticle/new-ministries/1118>.

"Kuwait: Anglo-Ottoman Relations 1890-1914." January 1, 1994. Accessed Winter 2017. http://shodhganga.inflibnet.ac.in/bitstream/10603/14230/11/11_chapter%204.pdf.

Lacey, Robert. *Inside the kingdom*. London: Arrow, 2010.

Lacey, Robert. *The Kingdom: Arabia & the House of Sa'ud*. New York, NY: Avon, 1983.
McLoughlin, Leslie J. *Ibn Saud: founder of a kingdom*. Basingstoke: Macmillan in association with St Antonys College, Oxford, 1995.

Missile from Yemen Intercepted near Riyadh Airport." *Manila Bulletin*, November 5, 2017. Accessed November 8, 2017. http://www.highbeam.com/doc/1G1-513278754.html?refid=easy_hf.

Miller, Aaron D. Search for security: Saudi Arabian oil and American foreign policy,

- 1939-1949. Chapel Hill: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991
- Mubarak, Faisal A. "CULTURAL ADAPTATION TO HOUSING NEEDS: A CASE STUDY, RIYADH, SAUDI Arabia." Accessed Winter 2017.
<https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/9ec8/5be58bbe4f86c018f11473e837c2b9edacdd.pdf>.
- Neild, David. *A Soldier in Arabia*. Surbiton, Surrey: Medina Publishing, 2015. Rajāyī, Farhang. *Islamism and modernism: the changing discourse in Iran*. Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008.
- Niblock, Tim. *Saudi Arabia: power, legitimacy and survival*. London: Routledge, 2006. 37, 55
- Ochsenwald, William, Sydney Nettleton Fisher, and Sydney Nettleton Fisher. *The Middle East: a history*. Boston: McGraw Hill, 2011.
- Rasheed, Madawi, and ‘Abd Al-Ilāh. Nu‘aymī. *Tārīkh al-‘arabīyah al-sa‘ū dīy*. London: Dar Al Saqi, 2002.
- Tripp, Harvey, and Margaret Tripp. *Culture shock!* Portland, Or.: Graphic Arts Center Pub. Co., 2000.
- Safran, Nadav. *Saudi Arabia: the ceaseless quest for security*. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991.
- Teitelbaum, Joshua. *Holier than thou: Saudi Arabias Islamic opposition*. Washington, DC: Washington Institute for Near East Policy, 2000.
- Wilson, Peter W., and Douglas F. Graham. *Saudi Arabia: the coming storm*. Armonk, N.Y: Sharpe, 1994
- Vasilev, A. M. *The History of Saudi Arabia*. New York: New York University Press, 2000.